

the maintenance of peace and security on the continent are widely acknowledged. Initiatives taken by Government in recent years include, *inter alia*, India's support and contribution to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the TEAM-9 initiative for development of relations with West Africa, the strengthening of technical assistance and capacity building programmes, extension of lines of credit, the Pan African e-Network Project and the CII Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership. India has also promoted high-level exchanges with Africa and enhanced cooperation with regional groupings in the continent. These initiatives have not only reinforced India's relations with Africa but also contributed significantly to the continent's progress and development.

Allotment of Raneri Lignite block, Bikaner, Rajasthan

*236. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allotted Raneri Lignite block of Bikaner district to Rajasthan State Mines and Minerals Ltd. (RSMM) and withdrawn the allotment as per suggestion of NLC;

(b) if so, the scheme of NLC to develop this block and by when; and

(c) whether Government would allot this block again to RSMM and if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) Raneri Lignite Block was allocated in favour of Rajasthan State Mineral Development Corporation Limited (RSMDC) on 1.07.2002. Subsequently, Neyveli Lignite Corporation Limited (NLC) had informed that the company would require this block for the purpose of power generation through the route of underground gasification. The Government after considering the request of NLC decided to withdraw allotment of this block from RSMDC.

(b) NLC had submitted a proposal on 'Underground Coal Gasification and its utilization for power generation studies in lignite deposits of Rajasthan' which envisaged an expenditure of Rs. 11.25 crore. This scheme is to be funded jointly by the Ministry of Coal, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and NLC. The Government had sanctioned the scheme on 8.8.2005 and it is expected to be completed within four years from the date of sanction.

(c) At present there is no such proposal under the consideration of the Government.